

Efforts Under Way

As noted throughout this report, a number of serious environmental challenges face Delaware's Chesapeake Basin, from an overload of nutrients to a steady loss of habitat for the unique wildlife that depends on the Basin for its survival. Many efforts are underway in the Chesapeake Basin to help improve and protect the environment – and many opportunities exist for you to contribute to the solution of our environmental problems.

The Nanticoke River watershed (including the Marshyhope Creek) comprises the single largest river system in Delaware's Chesapeake Basin. Not surprisingly, it has several local and regional environmental organizations monitoring land use decisions and activities and protecting the river with a variety of education, research, restoration, and land use planning projects. There are also several national organizations that have local interests in the Chesapeake Basin, such as the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. Five of the more active private organizations in the Chesapeake Basin are listed in this section. All are concerned with the Nanticoke River system and all offer opportunities for citizens to get involved.



Volunteers participate in restoration activities, such as re-establishing native plants, thereby creating stream-side buffers and reducing erosion.

Nanticoke Watershed Alliance

In June of 1992, Maryland and Delaware conservation organizations reached across state lines in a formal agreement to create the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance (NWA). The NWA is a non-profit organization and bi-state consortium of 36 diverse constituencies. Their mission is “to conserve the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Nanticoke River watershed for the benefit of present and future generations.” Their goals are to:

- ◆ *Promote and support protection, conservation, and management of important watershed-related natural resources and responsible resource-based industries.*
- ◆ *Recognize sites, structures, and activities that are important parts of the Nanticoke Watershed heritage, history, and livelihood, and work to achieve their preservation.*
- ◆ *Encourage educational and low impact recreational uses of the river.*

The NWA believes that “the level of conservation action in the Nanticoke Watershed over the next five years will largely determine the long-term future of this ecosystem. It is this window of opportunity of which we wish to take advantage. We know education, advocacy, land protection, and pro-active partnerships can protect our ecosystem. We believe that a lack of proactive efforts to preserve natural characteristics of a region ultimately leads to destruction of those attractions and concurrently to the economy of the region. This unique coalition will help secure the future environmental and economic health of the watershed.”

Since their inception, this **volunteer** organization has worked with thousands of citizens to conduct education, research, restoration, land use planning, and coalition building projects throughout the Nanticoke watershed. All of their projects are conducted in partnership with other organizations. Though small in staff and budget, their scope is wide and their multi-faceted focus makes them an important force in consensus building and in keeping those with different agendas working together.

The NWA has conducted numerous projects in



Natural coconut-husk logs are used to stabilize the banks along this stream in the Basin.

partnership with other organizations including:

- ◆ *an American shad restoration project;*
- ◆ *a water quality monitoring program;*
- ◆ *a canoe trail;*
- ◆ *a boater safety education project as a result of a recent study conducted with the Departments of Natural Resources in Maryland and Delaware;*
- ◆ *a proposal project for rural legacy funds to protect sensitive lands in the watershed;*
- ◆ *a joint effort with Wicomico County and Program Open Space to permanently protect Roaring Point;*
- ◆ *a joint effort with DuPont to permanently protect 200 acres along the Nanticoke River in Seaford, Delaware; and*
- ◆ *a joint project with Wicomico County and all interested parties to collaborate on rural design standards and an urban services agreement.*



Other activities have included: co-hosting an annual shad festival on the banks of the river; distributing an environmentally-sensitive yard care guide to citizens with the help of realtors who have already agreed to give the guide to home buyers; planning a demonstration site for bayscaping - a design for native plants to be used in landscaping (Salisbury Zoo volunteered to be the first demonstration site); continuing to develop classroom education; developing a web site; and annually pulling 15 to 30 tons of trash out of the river or nearby woods to help keep waterways clean and safe. These projects enhance awareness and appreciation of the Nanticoke, help prevent problems associated with other rivers, and present a model for other river protection groups. As the NWA is fond of saying, “If we take care of our river now we are saving ourselves from the much more difficult task of cleaning it up later.”

“There comes a point where we have to preserve some part of what has shaped and molded us as people - some part of what our forefathers handed down to us that has made southern Delaware a unique and wonderful place. It is now, while the Nanticoke River is still largely unspoiled, that we must preserve its places of special beauty and natural value before they are only a memory.” - Marlene Mervine, Founding Member of the NRWC, Delaware Adopt-A-Wetland Coordinator, Land Conservation Specialist